

# CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL

525 South Main Street

Cheshire, Connecticut

06410

[www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs](http://www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs)

*Principal*

Mary Gadd Ed.D.

*Assistant Principals*

Kristin Pelz

Maureen Reed

Daniel Tartarelli

Main Office: 203-250-2511

Athletics: 203-250-2552

Attendance: 203-250-2514

Guidance: 203-250-2556

Fax: 203-250-2563

**Testimony of Michelle Catucci**

**Executive Director, Connecticut School Counselor Association  
School Counseling Department Chairperson, Cheshire High School  
in support of**

**SB 186 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS.**

Education Committee- February 26, 2018

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, my name is Michelle Catucci and I am the School Counseling Department Chairperson at Cheshire High School in Cheshire, CT and the Executive Director of the Connecticut School Counselor Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer **testimony in support of Senate Bill 186- An Act Concerning School Counselors.**

By my State certification and my own professional practice, I am a school counselor, not a guidance counselor, and Senate Bill 186 adds my title, school counselor, to the statutes where currently only the term guidance counselor is used. The Department no longer endorses guidance counselors, so just like me, almost every counselor that works in a Connecticut school is also a school counselor by title, certification, endorsement, and practice. In fact, there are over 1400 school counselors, while only 68 guidance counselors remain in our state.

School counselors, in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Department of Education are required to have a master's degree, graduate credits in counseling and special education, a professional educator certificate, practicum and internship experiences in school counseling. In my training to become a school counselor, I completed a 60 credit master's program that included both a practicum and internship. My education, training, and practical experiences focused on being a proactive counselor, seeking out and collaborating with all stakeholders - including students, parents, faculty, community members, and administrators - to ensure the academic, social emotional, and post-secondary success of EVERY student. School Counselors are trained in data-driven decision making, to identify barriers to student success, and to implement a program of services at all grade levels, with an emphasis on equity and Response to Intervention at all three tiers. This is a dramatic shift from the role of guidance counselors of the past, which stereotypically was more reactive and vocationally focused.

I have been a School Counselor in Connecticut for the past 11 years, working at both the middle school and high school levels. I absolutely love the work I do with all students to help them reach their potential and goals, even when life can be difficult and stressful. In those 11 years, I have only seen the needs of my students grow - they need more academic support, social and emotional assistance and skill building, and guidance getting ready for post-secondary education and/or a career, and every day I come to work ready to take on the challenge of meeting my students' needs.

The mission of the Cheshire High School learning community is the enhancement of student understanding.



Member: New England Association of Schools and Colleges

# CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL

525 South Main Street

Cheshire, Connecticut

06410

[www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs](http://www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs)

*Principal*

Mary Gadd Ed.D.

*Assistant Principals*

Kristin Pelz

Maureen Reed

Daniel Tartarelli

Main Office: 203-250-2511

Athletics: 203-250-2552

Attendance: 203-250-2514

Guidance: 203-250-2556

Fax: 203-250-2563

My passion for my students and my profession has led me to get involved with the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA), which is the only professional organization in Connecticut dedicated to supporting and promoting the role of school counselors. I have served as President and Middle School Vice President, as well as on several committees for the duration of my career. Currently, I am the Executive Director of CSCA. Being committed to CSCA at such an intense level has only intensified my enthusiasm for not only my profession, but my desire that each and every student in the state of Connecticut has access to a school counselor and a comprehensive school counseling program.

A comprehensive school counseling program is data-driven, developmental, and preventative by design to promote the learning and achievement of ALL students based on standards in academic, college/career, and social emotional development. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), having a comprehensive school counseling program, like the ASCA National Model, "ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students; identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program; is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion; is based on data-driven decision making; [and] is provided by a state-credentialed school counselor" (ASCA, 2012) so that all students can fully participate in their education.

A comprehensive school counseling program encourages and promotes collaboration with other educators, such as school social workers and school psychologists, to meet students' needs. While the work of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists have some similarities, the roles of these three positions, when performed with fidelity, are different and distinct, and all three are needed in schools. Working in schools, I consult with my school social workers and school psychologists daily. We co-facilitate student counseling groups, we sit on SRBI teams together, we support one another in crisis interventions, and we brainstorm how to approach different student cases. However there are aspects and functions to each role that makes them unique.

As a school counselor, my daily work includes advocacy for ALL students, planning and delivering interventions at tiers I, II, and III, provide short-term counseling, and program delivery that supports ALL students' academic, social emotional, and college/career development. School psychologists and school social workers typically work with smaller, more defined groups of students and deliver tier II and III interventions, rather than working with all students. School psychologists provide and administer intelligence, cognitive processing, social emotional, adaptive and achievement assessments, identify special education needs and develop support strategies, and provide ongoing counseling to support IEP goals. School social workers serve as a liaison between home-school-community, make home visits and address truancy, administer behavioral and social emotional assessment, and provide ongoing counseling to identified students.

The mission of the Cheshire High School learning community is the enhancement of student understanding.



Member: New England Association of Schools and Colleges

# CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL

525 South Main Street

Cheshire, Connecticut

06410

[www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs](http://www.sites.google.com/a/cheshire.k12.ct.us/chs)

**Principal**

Mary Gadd Ed.D.

**Assistant Principals**

Kristin Pelz

Maureen Reed

Daniel Tartarelli

**Main Office:** 203-250-2511

**Athletics:** 203-250-2552

**Attendance:** 203-250-2514

**Guidance:** 203-250-2556

**Fax:** 203-250-2563

While these are only some examples of how the roles differ in schools, it illustrates how in order to meet the needs of ALL students, ALL students must have access to a school counselor because it is the only one of the three that provides services for ALL students by design. I would ask that you amend the underlying bill to include the Connecticut School Counselor Association proposal to have the State Board of Education adopt guidelines and recommendations for a comprehensive school counseling program. The language states:

*The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Connecticut School Counselor Association, shall adopt guidelines and recommendations to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling programing. Such recommendations shall ensure that academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary and career readiness programming is delivered by a certified school counselor with adequate training. The State Board of Education shall make any such guidelines and recommendations available to local and regional boards of education.*

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Catucci

Executive Director, Connecticut School Counselor Association

School Counseling Department Chairperson, Cheshire High School

44 Osage Drive, Wallingford, CT

203-985-5181, [mcatucci@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:mcatucci@cheshire.k12.ct.us)

The mission of the Cheshire High School learning community is the enhancement of student understanding.



Member: New England Association of Schools and Colleges